

Philosophy and the name

Restaurant Hærværk

The philosophy behind Restaurant Hærværk

The idea behind Hærværk is simple: to create a workplace where we have a bloody good time while constantly learning and developing in a craft you never finish mastering. A place where we get soil under our fingernails before we cook, and where close, personal relationships with our producers are the foundation. Relationships create respect, and respect creates good food.

Hærværk is also a place where we train apprentice chefs who should be ready to take on the world. They should be green ambassadors, skilled craftspeople and some of the best apprentices in the Kingdom of Denmark. They are not simply labour. They are our future.

We work with the season as it really is. Not the season printed on a calendar, but the season shaped by weather, soil, sea, animals and the people who grow, catch and deliver our ingredients. If strawberries ripen late, that is when we use them. If there are many, we preserve them for winter. What is in the field is what reaches the plate.

We are incredibly fortunate to be in Aarhus. East Jutland offers almost everything: fields, forests, fjord, sea, fruit, vegetables, fish, shellfish, game, beer, cider and people willing to make an effort. We therefore start close to home. Local, organic and biodynamic are not decoration. They are a way of working in which quality, responsibility and relationships belong together.

Fish is always caught with care. If nothing good is available at auction, there is no fish at Hærværk. We work with whole animals and animals that had a purpose before reaching the plate, for example in conservation grazing or dairy farming. It is about respect for the ingredient, the animal and the work behind it.

The same applies to what we pour. We keep exploring clean, living wines and producers who care for soil, grapes and craft. We increasingly look toward Denmark, where much is happening in wine, cider, beer and fruit. We make the alcohol-free pairings ourselves so they follow the kitchen, the season and the curiosity of the rest of the menu.

The dining experience is the one we love as guests: let go, lean back and let the host run the show. Curiosity is rewarded, shoulders drop and the food is allowed to surprise. Every good choice has already been made, leaving the guest simply to enjoy the journey.

Hærværk should not only make good food. We want to move the craft, the city and food culture in a better direction. This concerns ingredients and climate, but also people: training apprentices properly, creating a workplace where people can become skilled without being worn down, speaking respectfully, taking responsibility and passing something on.

We want to take part in the green transition and a better food culture, not by pointing fingers, but by using our voice, our experience and our everyday choices.

Hærværk is a place where we challenge old conventions and choose our own path. Climate, responsibility and common decency come before the bottom line. It should inspire better choices for the future, with biodiversity in the kitchen, on the plate and in our thinking: for guests, for ourselves and, most importantly, for nature.

The story behind the name



Three young chefs and one waiter opened Hærværk in 2014. Four people had to name what felt like our first child. It was not a quiet process.

I wanted to call the place Elementær. Mads was somewhere else entirely, talking about Don Karnage from TaleSpin. We were, to put it mildly, in separate camps. When you believe you have had a brilliant idea and it is rejected, you quickly become ready to shoot down everyone else's ideas too.

Two days before the press release had to go out, we still had no name. We sat down in Mads and Michael's apartment with plenty of wine and agreed that the matter had to be settled.

The name Hærværk emerged from a mixture of drunkenness, misunderstandings and something that nevertheless felt exactly right. I heard it as hær and værk: army and work, something about men, hands and craft. But also as vandalism against the way we ourselves had been trained as chefs.

Not against the craft, but against the part of it that wears people down and distances us from what we actually work with. We wanted to return to the seasons, direct collaboration with farmers and producers, whole animals, whole ingredients and enough time to care. No more food built from the same vacuum-packed cuts and standard products.

We wanted to tear something down in order to build something better, with more respect for ingredients, more respect for people, more soil under our fingernails and the same love of craft.

The fact that the premises had once housed an antiquarian bookshop made the name even better. The walls also held a small nod to Tom Kristensen's novel Hærværk.

So the name became Hærværk. Not because we wanted to destroy the culinary profession, but because we wanted to practise it in our own way.